



# City of Milwaukee

## Meeting Minutes

### SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

**ALDERMAN JOE DAVIS, SR., CHAIR**  
*Daisy Cubias, Al Durtka, Charles Vang and Vivian Chen*

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Thursday, March 23, 2006

1:30 PM

Room 301-B, City Hall

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#### Meeting Convened: 1:38 P.M.

**Present** Cubias, Durtka, Davis

**Excused** Chen, Vang

#### 1. Committee members introductions.

*Ald. Davis introduced each of the members who were present.*

#### 2. Discussion on the Committee's purpose.

*Ald. Davis gave a brief overview on how the initiative came about to become a member of the Sister Cities International and to create this Sister Cities committee.*

*Ald. Davis referred to Common Council File #041441 (Exhibit 1) and gave a brief overview of each of the four goals of the Sister Cities International and noted some of the membership benefits.*

*Ald. Davis then referred to Common Council File #050290 (Exhibit 2) and advised that the purpose of this committee is to review and possibly re-establish the current Sister Cities relationships in which the City of Milwaukee has been involved in. They will also layout some type of criteria, if in fact, they would like to retain those current Sister Cities relationships or if they will move forward and terminate some of those relationships so that they can move forward to create new Sister Cities. He further advised that they would review the existing policies and determine whether to amend, delete or recreate the policies and then refer those recommendations to the Common Council.*

*Mr. Durtka commented that he views this committee as being the gate keeper who will make sure that the relationships that they do have are very viable relationships and that those relationships have a good blending of both government as well as citizen participation. He feels they should emphasize more on citizen involvement, which is very important to the success of whatever relationship is developed. He then noted that this committee may want to add citizen involvement as a criteria. Ald. Davis replied that some guidelines might need to be added as this committee proceeds.*

*Ald. Davis asked Mr. Durtka how critical is it to establish a relationship with a city that may not have the democratic principles like the United States. Mr. Durtka replied that if the desire is there on the part of both individuals and communities, it could become a very success relationship. He noted that it would help the individual to understand the government, their beliefs, etc. and it could open up a whole new level of Sister city relationships. Ms. Cubias concurred with Mr. Durtka's comments and explained the*

*relationship the City of Milwaukee has with Cuba.*

*Ald. Davis asked Mr. Durtka if our purpose and mission is a companion to the Sister Cities International's purpose and mission. Mr. Durtka replied that he thinks it does.*

*Ms. Cubias advised that they have several Sister Cities relationships that have been on the books for many years and that have been inactive, and advised that if no body is working on them, and there isn't the resources to work with them, they should terminate those your Sister Cities and start new ones. She further advised that they only have two Sister Cities relationships that are active at this time and they are Cuba and Germany.*

*Ald. Davis noted that as they build on the relationships, they may want to look at the current policy and review whether it needs to be strengthen, because the current policy might have been the cause of the relationships to be ineffective and that the policy might have dictated the reason why they haven't been as active in years past. Mr. Durtka advised that they should look at those relationships that are working and see how those relationships are organized. He further noted that another issue that they need to consider is whether there are local Sister Cities committees, how active are those Committee, whether they are incorporated or if they are a 501C3, and what kind of structure does the committee have. He than commented that they need to build very strong local units to interface with, because the local units are the most crucial to the success on whether the relationship succeeds.*

*Mr. Ronald Leonhardt the City of Milwaukee City Clerk appeared and addressed the Committee. He noted that the discussion on the purpose of this Committee does reflect what is outline in the ordinance. He than advised that the ordinance also directs that the City Clerk's Office provide staffing to this committee and that would include the paying of the membership fees, which is being paid out of a Special Purpose Account, under the City Clerk's Office and in the future it will be made a part of the City Clerk's budget. Ms. Terry MacDonald will be the principle staff to the committee who will handle all of the organization details, such as the committee agenda's, meeting notices, organizing the meeting, etc. and Ms. Angelyn Ward with the City Clerk's, Legislative Reference Bureau, is the person to contact for research information as well as the drafting of any legislations, such as any revisions to the current guidelines, etc.*

*Mr. Leonhardt introduced Mr. Paul Konenbourg, who is a visiting graduate student from Dresden University in Germany, and his visit is sponsor by the Mayor's Office. Mr. Konenbourg addressed the committee on his visit to Milwaukee and advised that he can provide information to this committee on how Europe conducts its Sister Cities relationships.*

### **3. Review and discussion on the Sister Cities International policies.**

*Ald. Davis referred to Mr. Durtka for a briefing on the Sister Cities International Policies.*

*Mr. Durtka submitted the following materials: Sister Cities International membership directory (Exhibit 3), Sister Cities International Newsletter (Exhibit 4), 50th Anniversary Conference newsletter (Exhibit 5), Criteria for Selecting a Sister City (Exhibit 6) and Sister Cities International Fact Sheet (Exhibit 7).*

*Mr. Durtka gave a presentation on the Sister Cities International, mission, organization structure, projects and programs (Exhibit 8). He than explained the Criteria for Selecting a Sister City (Exhibit 6).*

*Ald. Davis asked Mr. Durtka, when developing a Sister Cities relationship how important is it that both cities have similar interest. Mr. Durtka replied that the interest would be on*

*a one to one relationship and all the little things, such as how the education system works, work training programs, etc. could establish an interest between cities. Mr. Durtka advised that a relationship might have to continue for a year or two, before an agreement is developed. He further advised that some cities abroad don't have citizen volunteer involvement and that they lean more towards a formalized government system, but if there is a general interest a relationship will develop.*

*Ald. Davis asked that as part of the criteria, would both Cities looking to have a Sister Cities relationship need to have a membership in the Sister Cities International. Mr. Durtka advised that Milwaukee would need to be a member of Sister Cities International, but the other country wouldn't necessarily have to be a member. Mr. Durtka then elaborated on the benefits of a membership.*

*Ms. Cubias advised that the Mayor's office is committed to having Sister Cities Relationships, and noted that the most recent relationship that he would like to establish is with China.*

*Ald. Davis asked if one of the major criteria is to create a committee like this one. Mr. Durtka replied that it isn't criteria, but it all works together and would make the City look organized.*

*Ald. Davis asked if it is important to establish a connection with the embassies, not only here in the United States but in other countries. Mr. Durtka advised that it isn't necessary, but it would be helpful. He further advised of the importance of connecting with the other staff of those Cities who are considered the main go to person. Ms. Cubias concurred with Mr. Durtka's comment and then noted that officials tend to have high turnover, whereas the staff or go to person doesn't change as frequent and that makes it easier to continue the contact. Ald. Davis advised that one of their challenges, would be to find out what steps they will need to take to strengthen a relationship before an agreement is sign. Ms. Cubias advised that is why it is important to have a group such as this Committee in Milwaukee. Mr. Durtka commented that they will come across multiple groups within the City of Milwaukee who think that they should be the one to have a Sister City relationship with Milwaukee. He advised that they can't have a Sister Cities relationship with every City who has a group in the City of Milwaukee, and they will have to choose by looking at the strengths of those people and/or groups that will bring to the table their proposal for a Sister Cities relationship.*

*Ald. Davis advised that they will have to develop a work plan and that work plan would have to encumber the Sister Cities International policies.*

#### **4. Review and discussion on the City of Milwaukee's Sister Cities policies.**

*Mr. Leonhardt referred to a September 22, 2005 Memorandum (Exhibit 9) from himself to the Members of the Common Council. He read through the list of current policies and gave a brief overview of each.*

*Ald. Davis noted that the current policy doesn't seem to preclude them from using city funds for receptions. Mr. Leonhardt advised that item #7 in the Memo does state that any expenditure associated with a sister city program must be approved by Common Council. Mr. Leonhardt further noted that the City Clerk's Office does have funds budgeted for receptions. Ald. Davis then noted that the current policy does preclude the use of city funds for travel expenses (Item #8).*

*Ms. Cubias advised that they should revised item #5, and asked what was the criteria for item #5 - that they not exceed no more than 2 cities adopted within a 2 year period. Ald.*

*Davis commented that revising the policy would be part of the work plan and the criteria that this committee will establish before they start entertaining additional Sister Cities. He advised that once they establish a work plan and policy, it will strength the program based upon today's standards. Mr. Leonhardt replied to Ms. Cubias questions and advised that at the time that policy was adopted, the City only had 1 or 2 Sister Cities relationships established and their major concern at that time was the sustainability of those relationships. He further noted that they didn't want to go to fast or to have too many relationships established, and than find that they wouldn't be able to support those relationships. Mr. Leonhardt than commented that If there are active community groups and good relationships established and they are functioning fine, they're would be no reason to have a cap on them.*

**5. Review and discussion on the City of Milwaukee's current Sister Cities relationships and requests for Sister Cities relationships.**

*Mr. Leonhardt addressed the committee and gave a brief history on the current Sister Cities relationships (Exhibit 10).*

*Ms. Cubias advised that because of the change of power in Ticuantepe, Nicaragua they lost contact in 1990's.*

*Mr. Durtka advised that within the Sister Cities International policy, it states that a city can only have one international city relationship, per country. He advised that in the future they would have to first find out if any other US City has a Sister Cities relationship with the City that Milwaukee may have an interest in, and second, Milwaukee would have to asked that US City for permission (waiver) to also have a Sister Cities relationship with that City and If they didn't give their permission (waiver), the relationship would become a friendship relationship only, not an official Sister Cities. Ald. Davis asked if that criterion is based on Sister Cities International policy. Ald. Durtka replied yes it is.*

*Mr. Leonhardt asked Mr. Durtka how does the Sister Cities International view the City of Milwaukee's current Sister Cities relationships. Mr. Durtka replied that right now they do recognize those current relationships, because they are pre-existing. Mr. Durtka replied that now that Milwaukee is a member, the new directory (2006) will show the current City of Milwaukee Sister Cities relationships.*

*Ms. Cubias advised that she has a file that goes back about 6 years that contains information from several cities through out the country requesting relationships with the City of Milwaukee. She noted that they haven't found a group in Milwaukee yet to work with those requests. Ald. Davis advised that thought this committee, they will put together guidelines and structures that they will put into place, as to how they will go about receiving formal requests for Sister Cities relationships. Ald. Davis further noted that a request should be formally written with some type of criteria, along with a formal application. It will then come to this committee and they will evaluate all the points.*

*Ald. Davis referred to the current Sister Cities resolutions and noted that there doesn't seem to be a standard format used. He asked Mr. Leonhardt if he recommends that this committee concentrate on a format, so that when a sister cities resolutions are prepared, the criteria is list in the resolution. Mr. Leonhardt advised that it would be a good idea for this committee to make a recommendation, that whenever a resolution is prepared, there is some standardization and that it should include certain information or certain conditions so that it is made clear how it relates to the local and international Sister Cities policies.*

*Ald. Davis noted that the first task of this committee is to look at the current Sister Cities*

*relationships and determine which Sister Cities relationships to keep and which Sister Cities relationships to terminate. Ald. Davis asked the Mayor's Office to contact the current Sister Cities and be prepared to inform this committee of the status of those relationships at the next meeting.*

*Mr. Durtka recommended that if they can identify those individuals who are still involve, they could have them prepare a summary report of what they have done in the last two years.*

*Mr. Durtka than commented that they might want to consider legislation that would include an automatic disengagement clause, whereas a relationship would come up for a renewal every 5 years. This would prevent the committee from being face with picking up the piece and trying to put it back together again every few years. Ald. Davis agreed with Mr. Durtka, that a report be required at renewal time and also a public appearance by the contact person who can give the report and answer questions.*

**6. Next meeting date, time and agenda**

*Ald. Davis asked Mr. Leonhardt to prepare some recommendations on how to setup a structure for this Committee and be prepared to give a briefing at the next meeting.*

*Ald. Davis asked the Mayor's Office and the City Clerk's Office to contact those individuals who are interested in continuing a relationship with the City of Milwaukee, and let them know that it is mandatory that they appear before this Committee and to prepare a report and submit it to this Committee ahead of the meeting date, so that the member will have a chance to review it. Mr. Leonhardt advised that they would work with the Mayor's Office to contact those individuals, and that they may want to start with those that are very active first.*

*Ald. Davis recommends that this Committee meet once a month and that the Staff Assistant with contact each member to setup the next meeting date.*

**Meeting Adjourned: 2:59 P.M.**

**Terry J. MacDonald**  
**Staff Assistant**